

BRAVO Zulu



The crew of Venom 512 was conducting a routine, functional-check flight south of Naval Station Mayport, Fla. Shortly after the main-rotor, smoothing-VH, data-collection run, the aircrew heard an increase in the overall noise level. All crew members acknowledged an unusual mid-frequency howl. AW2 Wade Payne also heard a noise and felt a vibration directly above his station.

LCdr. Bert Race slowed the SH-60B helo to 100 knots. While the vibrations and unusual noises were being investigated and landing options were being considered, a sharp bang and a yaw kick shook the airframe. Lt. Jeremy Leiby immediately recognized a No. 1 engine overspeed condition and executed NATOPS procedures. Meanwhile, LCdr. Race saw a zero-torque condition on the No. 1 engine and knew that Venom 512 had a high-speed shaft failure.

LCdr. Race slowed the aircraft from 100 to 70 knots and set up for an emergency landing. He made a single-engine landing at a private airfield, nine miles south of Naval Station Mayport. There were no injuries and no other aircraft damage.

Postflight inspection revealed the flex coupling on the No. 1 engine-output shaft had separated from the transmission. An engineering investigation is in work to determine the cause of the failure.

Lt. Jeremy Leiby
LCdr. Bert Race
AW2 Wade Payne





By LtCol. Peyton DeHart, USMCR

At a seminal moment in the movie “The Matrix,” Morpheus offers Neo the choice of taking a blue pill and returning to the cocooned world of seeing what he wanted to see, or taking a red pill to see the world as it really is.

I was sitting in a comfy, form-fitted pod that throbbed in a soothing fashion around me. A wire ran from the back of my head to a signal processor that sent sound and voices into my ears. I effortlessly was flying along the shoreline of Lake Michigan, looking at the million-dollar homes slide past on my left. Life was wonderfully “blue pill.”

The lieutenant in the front cockpit of the AH-1W asked why we would travel so far from home for a static display in Manitowoc, Wis.

“I think it’s just a leftover frag request no one else wanted,” I said.

“Well, why go?” he asked.

“Because every Wisconsin air show that is not in Oshkosh tries to prove it is better than the one there, which means taking care of those who serve as static displays. Stay alert. This is a Friday afternoon, and we’re flying due north along a no-brainer navigation route of shoreline with a billion-dollar view. You’d best keep an eye out ahead,” I replied.

“Why?” he asked.

“Because any second now, a light, civil aircraft ought to materialize out of the haze, headed due sou...”

A Cessna 172 materialized out of the haze 1,000 feet

in front of us, headed straight for our cockpit. Bottom collective, 60-degree angle of bank, slicing dive to the right, toward the offshore water.

“Do you think he saw us?” he asked.

“No, there was no reaction from him,” I said.

“Well, how did you know something was going to be there?”

“I try not to be lulled by what I want to see. If we focus on the potential risks of this flight, we can work to avoid them—like being prepared to miss a head-on collision,” I said.

Years ago, while I was flying as a copilot during an exercise in Norway, my pilot told me to keep an eye on the high ridgelines of the fjords to see the power-line poles perched on top.

“Why not just look for the wires?” I had asked.

“Because you can’t see them in time,” my pilot replied. “If you see power poles, you know there are wires, and you know you can’t see them. It’s time to pick another route.”

Five minutes later, over squadron common, came the broadcast, “W-i-i-i-r-e-ss!”

“Hmmm,” my pilot said, “I bet he about pulled a loop there when he finally saw the wires; he wasn’t watching the ridgelines.”

You can see the world you hope to see, or you can see the real world full of risks, assess them, and figure out the work-arounds. Take the red pill.

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